

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P 291655Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6070

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7810

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, GR

SUBJ: NATO MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE AND GREECE

REF: A. ATHENS 7758

B. STATE 234421

C. ATHENS 7637

D. STATE 229458

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTELS I MET PRIVATELY EARLY THIS AFTER-
NOON WITH DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF TO DISCUSS SECDEF'S LETTER
ON MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE. I BRIEFED AVEROFF ORALLY ON THE BACK-
GROUND OF THE LETTER AND EXPLAINED WHY WE WERE HANDLING IT
THE WAY WE WERE. THEN I GAVE HIM AN UNADDRESSED, UNSIGNED
COPY OF THE TEXT OF THE SECDEF LETTER AS CONTAINED IN STATE
229458.

2. AVEROFF SAID HE APPRECIATED OUR TAKING THIS MATTER UP WITH
HIM IN THIS WAY. HE GLANCED THROUGH THE TEXT OF THE LETTER
AND SAID WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST PART OF THE LETTER
THAT IT SEEMED TO HIM TO BE A VERY "SERIOUS AND ACCURAGE
ANALYSIS" OF THE SITUATION. HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS
THE MATTER WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS AND WOULD BE IN
TOUCH WITH ME FURTHER ABOUT IT LATER. HE LEFT OPEN THE POSSI7
BILITY THAT HE MIGHT PREFER SOME ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE -- HE
DIDN'T INDICATE WHAT -- FOR HANDLING THE LETTER OFFICIALLY.
ON THE OTHER HAND, HE INDICATED HE MIGHT JUST LET THE MATTER REST
WHERE IT IS.

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3. WE THEN GOT INTO A FURTHER DISCUSSION ABOUT GREECE'S PRESENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATO AND THE OUTLOOK FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR AND 1975. THIS WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY AT HIS INITIATIVE, WITH ME MERELY ENCOURAGING HIM TO CONTINUE WITH SOME COMMENT OR QUESTION FROM TIME TO TIME.

4. AVEROFF SAID THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO OVER 7,000 GREEK OFFICERS SINCE BECOMING DEFENSE MINISTER AND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HE WAS PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A POSSIBLE RENEWED AND CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO IN THE FUTURE IF CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANTED IT. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN MAKING THE POINT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS AND MEETINGS WITH THESE OFFICERS -- WHICH WERE PRIMARILY INTENDED TO GAIN THEIR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR HIS AND CARAMANLIS' EFFORTS TO RETURN GREECE TO A CIVILIAN AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT -- THAT GREECE HAD NO REAL ALTERNATIVE TO ITS DECISION IN AUGUST TO WITHDRAW FROM THE NATO MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE. AVEROFF HAD BEEN STRESSING THAT THIS WAS FOR GREECE A REQUIREMENT, AN ACT OF "HONOR". HOWEVER, AVEROFF SAID HE WAS ALSO POINTING OUT THAT BY THIS ACT GREECE WAS PAYING A PRICE AND RISKING A REDUCTION IN ITS OWN NATIONAL SECURITY. AVEROFF THOUGHT THIS LATTER POINT WAS BEGINING TO BE FELT.

5. AVEROFF WENT ON TO SAY THAT BARRING SOME NEW UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT THE GOG WOULD CONTINUE TO "GO SLOW" AS FAR AS ANY FURTHER DECISIONS OR ACTIONS ON RELATIONSHIPS ON NATO WERE CONCERNED. MOREOVER, IF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM AND GREECE'S RELATIONS WITH TURKEY COULD BE SORTED OUT SATISFACTORILY, IT WAS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE GOG COULD MOVE DURING THE COMING YEAR TO REBUILD AND REINVIGORATE ITS TIES WITH THE ALLIANCE.

6. IN RESPONSE TO SOME TENDENTIOUS QUESTIONING ON MY PART, AVEROFF VOLUNTEERED THAT SOME OF THE OTHER NATO COUNTRIES HAD BEEN GIVING GREECE SOMETHING OF A HARD TIME, SAYING GREECE COULD NOT HAVE IT BOTH WAYS--BOTH LOOSENEED TIES AND FULL NATO COMMITMENTS ON SECURITY. WHY, AVEROFF WENT ON, SOME EUROPEANS WERE EVEN QUESTIONING GREECE'S DESIRE TO ENTER MORE FULLY INTO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS EXPRESSING AN INTENTION

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TO WITHDRAW FROM NATO. AS WE HAD FURTHER EXCHANGES ON THIS THEME AVEROFF EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR USG UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION DURING THIS PRESENT AMBIGUOUS STAGE OF GREECE'S TIES WITH NATO. HE STATED AGAIN FLATLY AS HE AND OTHER MINISTERS IN THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT HAVE TOLD ME EARLIER, THAT THE AUGUST DECISION AND ANNOUNCEMENT ON WITHDRAWING FROM THE MILITARY SIDE OF NATO HAD BEEN AN OVERRIDING POLITICAL NECESSITY FOR CARAMANLIS

AND HIS FRAGILE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN THOSE EARLY DAYS, OR
THEY WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED.

7. COMMENT: AVEROFF, OF COURSE, IS ONE OF THE MOST FORTH-
COMING AND ENCOURAGING INTERLOCUTORS WE HAVE IN THE GREEK
GOVERNMENT AS FAR AS NATO IS CONCERNED. EVEN SO, IF WE AND OUR
ALLIES PROCEED CAREFULLY, WITH UNDERSTANDING, RESTRAINT AND THE
RIGHT COMBINATION OF BOTH CARROT AND STICK -- AND IF CARAMANLIS
AND HIS GOVERNMENT RECEIVE STRONG POPULAR BACKING AT THE POLLS
NOVEMBER 17 -- I BELIEVE THERE IS A REASONABLE PROSPECT OF
GREECE COMING BACK INTO THE NATO FOLD IN A WAY THAT SHOULD
PROVE ACCEPTABLE ALL AROUND.

8. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT TO US MISSION NATO AND OTHERS
AS DESIRED. ALL ADDRESSEES SHOULD OF COURSE PROTECT SENSITIVE
AND PERSONAL ASPECTS OF CONVERSATION REPORTED ABOVE. KUBISCH

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